

A
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
TRUE METHODS
OF
Treatment & Usage
OF THE
NEGRO SLAVES,
IN THE
British West-India Islands.

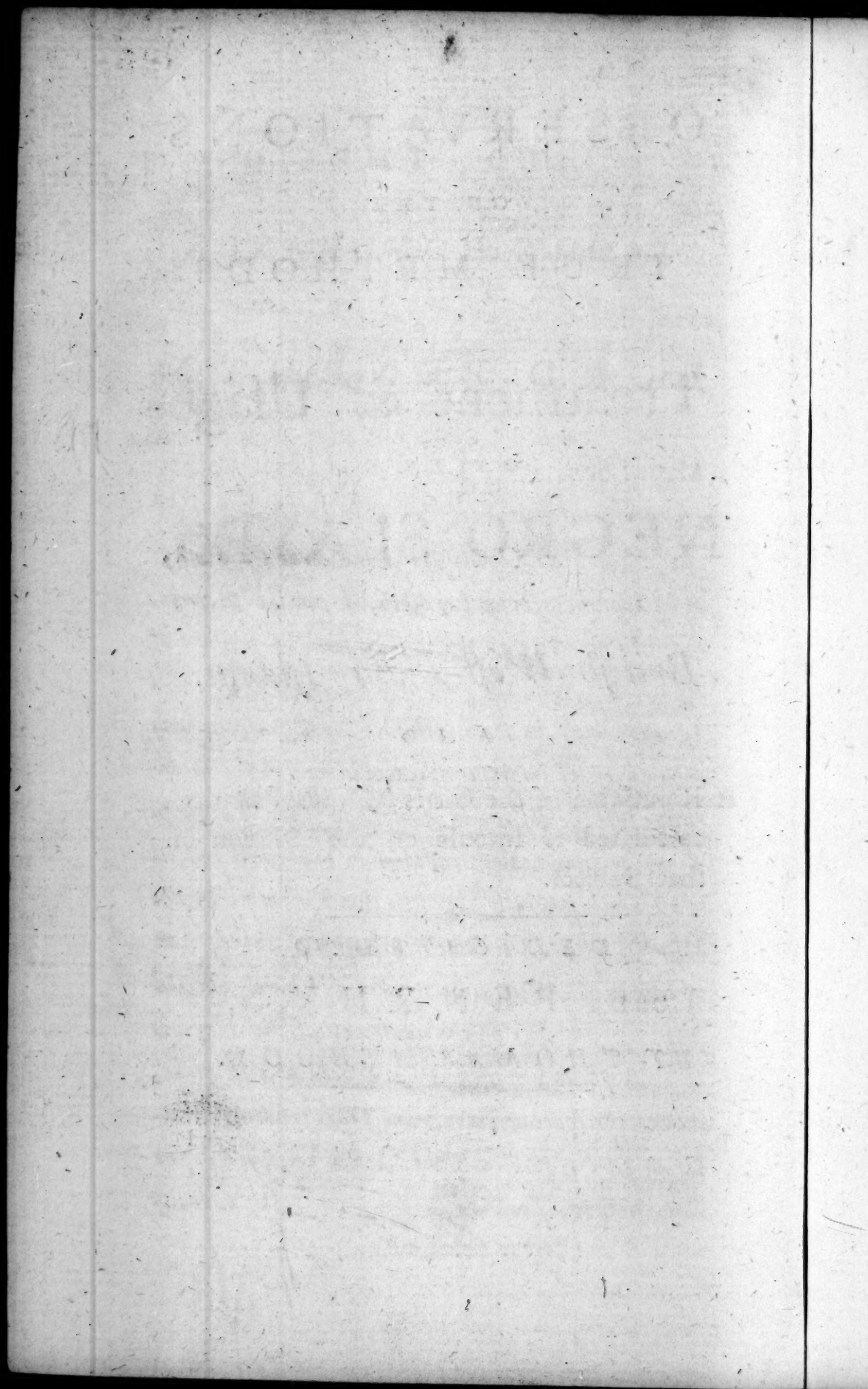
AND

A Refutation of the Gross Misrepresentations
calculated to Impose on the Nation on
that Subject.

DEDICATED TO
LORD PENRHYN,
BY THOMAS ATWOOD.

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TO THE
RIGHT HONORABLE
LORD PENRHYN.

MY LORD,

ALTHOUGH I have not the Honour to be known to Your Lordship, I am led to hope, that the sincerity of my wishes, for the welfare of my Country; and the good of the English West-India Islands; may in some measure apologize, for any seemingness of improper freedom in me; in the Dedication of the following sheets, to Your Lordship. Knowing your zealous endeavours to prevent the ill consequences, which threaten this Kingdom, by the attempts in practice for the abolition of the African Trade in the British Settlements; I have collected such observations, on the treatment of the Negroes in those places; which I have been able to make, during the space of Twenty-one Years residence there. Great part of which Time, I was employed in the
capacity

capacity of both Overseer and Manager of different Plantations, in those Islands. The treatment of Negroes, in consequence, came more immediately under my knowledge; was a particular part of my attention; and shall be happy if the following remarks on that Subject, may in the least measure operate to assist the endeavours of Your Lordship, for the benefit of the British Colonies; and defeat the ill designs opposed to their existence.

I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most Humble and Obedient

Servant,

THOMAS ATWOOD.

London, 23d. of May, 1789.

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OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
TRUE METHODS
OF
TREATMENT & USAGE
OF THE
NEGROE SLAVES.

WHILST a set of Men, under the appearance of being actuated by motives of Humanity; are industriously endeavouring to ruin the English West-India Islands, and contriving to lessen the importance of those Settlements to Great Britain. It essentially concerns this Nation, and especially the majority of people composing it, who from their unacquaintance with the Nature of the situation of the Negroes in the English Plantations in that part of the World, are liable to be drawn away by the insinuations, for the causes of these designs; to pay

pay a due attention to the nature of this business; and not rashly give their Votes in favor of measures, so replete with ill consequences, to the Welfare of this Kingdom.

In order the better to come at a proper knowledge in this respect, it will be necessary to be informed of the circumstances relative to the state of the Slaves, in the British Colonies; the treatment they receive from their Masters; with the nature and extent of their Labours; and by the way making such comparison of their situation with that of people in general in this Country; together with the difference in point of desirableness of that situation, in preference to what, the Negroes are subject to, in Africa; as may enable us to form a competent judgment, conclusive in favor of the treatment of those people, in the West-Indies; notwithstanding the laboured attempts for a belief of the contrary; calculated to impose on this Nation,

For this purpose, it will be proper to observe that in the Plantations, the slave is in every respect, as much the object of the attention of his owner, as is the Stock which compose the property of the Farmer in this country; for the purpose of carrying on the business of his Farm. Which to neglect, ill treat, or abuse, would equally operate to his disadvantage, as a similar
mode

mode of conduct in the Planter would be destructive to his interest. So also, taking the situation of a slave, into consideration as a servant; it would be the height of presumption to suppose the Planter, to be so wholly ungoverned by every principle of humanity, to say nothing of his want of regard to himself; as by cruelly to and ill treatment of his slave; he would in the first instance, forfeit every pretension to, and and in the other expose himself to the loss of a very considerable property, by a conduct so very inconsistent

Besides, the Slave is protected by the Laws of the Colonies; no master having authority to dismember or take away the life of his slave; for should he transgress in either instance, that master is liable to trial and condemnation, as a Felon is in this country.

These Laws are in a particular manner calculated for the benefit of the slaves. A robbery committed by an individual of them, which in England, to a small amount, is Death; is in no case inflicted in the Colonies, unless the property stolen, be of the value of Five Pounds. This valuation is made previous to the trial of the offender, by two respectable white Inhabitants; and should they bring in the damage to a less amount, the culprit is liable only to be publickly whipped.

So attentive are masters for the preservation of the Lives of their slaves, that they often submit to a considerable loss on these occasions; by the transportation of their slaves, who have transgressed these laws; particularly in cases that will admit of the least extension of mercy. As in the crime of running away, from their service, for the space of three months; to which the forfeiture of life is annexed; but is very often changed for the former. This seldom affects the slave, but is often injurious to the master; as in the one instance he would be paid the value of his slave by the Colony, but in the other he must be a considerable loser; besides lessening the consequence of his property to his Plantation.

In other respects, the greatest attention is paid to the welfare of the Slaves, in the Colonies; cherished and protected by their masters, with their families, equally the care of the former as of themselves; whose attachment to their offspring it would be folly to doubt; their situation is far from being unenviable. If industrious and well inclined, they are encouraged with every degree of tenderness; if lazy or badly disposed, moderate correction is the only consequence; and not, by abandoning them for the failings of human nature

nature; expose them to the commission of Crimes inimical to the Laws of God and man.

The Labours of the Negroes in the Plantations, differ widely in point of hardships, from those endured by the Farmer or Artificer of this country; and is unattended with that degree of wretchedness, too commonly annexed to the Situation of the latter. Who the moment they awake, often at midnight, go to their daily task; which with little intermission is seldom finished, at the time the Negroes are at their perfect repose. Nay, I frequently see numbers of labouring white people, in this metropolis; at work the whole night through, and on Sabbath days, which practice is wholly disallowed in the West-Indies.

The Negroe goes to his labour, each morning at Sun-rise, is allowed a proper time for his breakfast, has two full hours for dinner, and to refresh himself; after which he labours only till Sun-set, which in the West-Indies, in the longest season, is between six and seven o'clock; and has till next morning between five and six wholly at his own disposal. Except in Crop time, when making Sugar; which process requires much watching; but then those employed the one day, are relieved by others the next; or have a proper time allowed them, for sleep
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in the day time, which is a benefit the white overseers employed in the same business, have seldom an opportunity to enjoy throughout the Crop ; but are obliged to be present night and day during that process. Besides the Negroes at work making the Sugar, are allowed by their masters, a double portion of provision ; in compensation for their being taken from the cultivation of their Gardens, during that period.

Each Slave has a spot of Ground assigned him by the master in his Plantation, for a Garden. In which is produced Yams, Potatoes, Cassada, and other kinds of provision of that Climate, Pease, Cabbages, Turnips, Carrots, Salads, Herbs and all other European vegetables, besides breeding Hogs, Goats, Fowls and other articles of Stock, from the sale of which in the markets ; they are enabled to live very comfortably, and have likewise a weekly allowance of provisions from their master.

The latter furnishes their Negroes with cloths necessary for them, and to guard them from the inclemencies of the weather ; also provides them with a Doctor, Medicines and every thing proper for them when sick ; and if superannuated by age or disorder, he is obliged to maintain them and by the laws prevented from leaving them

them destitute, or becoming an incumbrance to the Colony.

For the cultivation of their Gardens, they are allowed generally a day in each week ; most-ly on Saturdays, or in Crop time on any day that can be spared from the making of Sugar. Besides the spare time of the two hours allowed them each day for dinner, and refreshment from labour for their masters. And on Sundays they are at liberty to cultivate them, or carry their produce to market.

This they do with a degree of industry, equal to that of the Farmer in this Country; and I have often with great satisfaction been witness to the happiness they enjoy, from the disposal of their different articles, and the pleasure they seem to experience after coming from market, with the money they had received from the produce of their Gardens; with drums, dancing and merriment spending the Evening with their fellow servants on these joyful occasions,

Every Negro family, has a House to reside in, built by their Master in his Plantation, consisting of two or more apartments. These Houses it is his Interest to have properly situated, well covered, clean and kept in repair; for the Health and convenience of his Slaves. Many
of

of whom, from the produce of their Garden and Stock; build themselves very comfortable wooden Dwellings; superior in neatness and convenience, to those in which numbers of White people reside, in the Colonies, or even in England.

Satisfied with their situation, and from every observation I have been able to make, during Twenty-one Years residence among them; they appear to be perfectly contented with the Lot, which Providence seems to have destined for them; the Idea of what we term Freedom barely existing among those people; but as it has been raised by their Knowledge of these insidious endeavours, said to be exerted by motives of Humanity.

This Knowledge they derive, from persons in general of their own Colour, many of whom, being themselves liberated by the consequences of the late unfortunate War in America; coming from this Country to the Colonies, report among the Slaves, the measures here in practice for the abolition of the Slave Trade. Thereby engaging their desires for a situation, they have heretofore been strangers to; and of which very few of those people so liberated, have been able to reap any benefit from in this Country. But

as is well known put the Government to an enormous expence to get rid of, by transporting them to Africa, as a set of people incapable of any service to the State; and only a burthen on it. for their support and Maintenance.

In the Colonies, the generality of free people of Colour, are by the Slaves considered in a very unfavourable state of esteem; for many of them, being of a lazy and vicious disposition; the men in general being much addicted to Gaming, Drunkenness, and Debauchery; and the Women supporting themselves chiefly, by means the most infamous to the Sex; are accordingly held by the Slaves in the most perfect detestation.

Not only on this score, but also from the treatment the latter too often experience, when so unfortunate to belong to the former. Who are remarkable in general for a mode of treating their Slaves. although of their own Colour; with a severity excelling White people. And from my own Knowledge in this respect, I am persuaded, that the notions here prevalent of cruelty being exercised on the Slaves in the Plantations; has been chiefly engaged, by the practise of that circumstances; too common among many free people of Colour there.

It being foreign to my purpose, to notice the treatment of Negroes, on board the Ships that bring them from Africa; as a matter to which I am quite a stranger; but which however appears to me, to be unattended with those horrid circumstances, endeavoured to be imposed, as absolutely the practice of persons using that Trade. For this cause, that it seems entirely irreconcilable to my Ideas of propriety; to suppose such persons, could act with such inconsistency for the promotion of their Interests; as even to neglect taking every care of of a considerable property, in which they are themselves always materially concerned. But shall confine myself to making such observations on the situations of Negroes in Africa, their own proper Country; as may serve to shew the difference from that they enjoy in the English Settlements, as abundantly preferable to the other.

By the most authentic accounts, from numbers of respectable persons in England, and other parts of Europe; persons, who have resided in Africa, and were eye witnesses to the facts. We find Negroes, are exposed in that country, to the most abject and cruel situation, Human nature is capable of undergoing. Subject to the tyranny of their Kings, Princes and Cheifs;

Chiefs; who often sacrifice whole villages of People to their capricious and arbitrary dispositions. Taking them captives, either for offerings in their idolatrous worships; after murdering them with the most shocking circumstances of horror; or selling them for slaves to other Nations. Not only this, but in the remote parts of Africa; human carcases are exposed to sale, as beef or mutton, is in the English markets; and human flesh devoured, by the wretched natives of those places.

Incredible as this matter may appear, and the idea of that custom reprobated as it is, by people in this country; as a thing impossible to be practised. It is however no less true, and from my own knowledge of the commission of similar circumstances, in two instances in the West-Indies; I am persuaded of the existence of that diabolical custom, being in use among the Negroes in Africa.

The first instance to which I refer, happened in the Island of Antigua; and was transacted by two Negroes lately purchased at that time by an eminent Planter in that Island. These wretches savage as the most wild beast, although treated by their master, with every tenderness and care; unused to that life of civilization among his other negroes, soon after being in his possession, absented

absented themselves from his Plantation. When, after some time being missing, they were apprehended; and on them was found, the joint bones of the fingers and toes, with the skulls of several human bodies; which these Cannibals had murdered and devoured, in their recess in the woods; where they had been hid, while absent from the service of their master. They were both executed for this horrid transaction; and I was present at the time of their execution.

The other, happened in the Island of Dominica, at the time that unfortunate Island fell into the hands of the French, in the late unhappy war. The Negroes, encouraged by the Marquis Du Chilleau, the French Governor, from his hatred to the English Inhabitants; caused the slaves to rebel against their masters, were provisioned and armed by him, for the purpose of executing his barbarous designs, of murdering all the English; in case that Island had been attacked by the British Army and Fleet, which he then momentarily expected. Among these rebels was a Negroe Chief, whose practice it was, to steal, murder, and eat the bodies of Children, who were so unfortunate as to fall in his way. This monster in human shape, after having absolutely devoured the bodies of several Children; whose flesh it appears, he preferred to any other, it was eminent in his power to procure!

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was at length detected in the fact, and shot by his own people ; from many of whom I have had this relation of the matter, corroborated with proper demonstrations of the certainty of the circumstance ; too respectable to be the least doubted

The Negroes, from Africa, by their introduction in the British Colonies, are entirely freed from that dreadful situation to which they are exposed, in their own country ; and are released from the apprehension of ever suffering a similar fate among white people. They are soon sensible of their happiness in the change ; and I have often seen them, shrink with horror at the very thoughts of returning to their own country.

It is true, there is a proper discipline necessary to be kept up among them in the Plantations. But when it is considered, that in all States, punishments are requisite to be inflicted ; to deter from the commission of crimes inimical to the government ; so the Colonies cannot be said to be singular in that respect. But when it is known, as is absolutely the case ; that the practice of this discipline to those people, is wholly unattended with those barbarities that is endeavoured to be established, as the practice in the English West-India Islands, I make no doubt

doubt, but that in the judgement of impartial persons, in this country; the West-India Planter will be honorably acquitted of those insidious aspersions, endeavoured to be fixed on that extensive and respectable body of Englishmen.

I shall for the present, conclude these observations on this important business; by asking the advocates for the abolition of the slave trade. In what manner they intend to provide for carrying on the cultivation of Sugars and other valuable produce of the West-Indies; in case their measures, should be successful; and productive of no other ill consequences to the welfare of this Kingdom; than what may operate to the disadvantage of the West-India Merchants and Planters?

How do they propose replacing the certain loss of labour, after the Negroes are liberated by their means? Is it by sending greater numbers of people from this country, than heretofore to the Colonies, for these purposes? They may imagine these matters easily accommodated; but they will find in the end; that altho' they may depopulate Great Britain; they will never be able to advantage in the least respect, the West-India Islands, independent of the African trade. And from my own experience in the
course

course of Twenty-one years residence in the West-Indies; during which time, I have, it may be said, seen the Islands twice buried in the loss of their white inhabitants; very few of the vast numbers I was acquainted with on my first coming there, being now alive, from the inclemencies of that Climate, so fatal to European constitutions. I am persuaded, that the major part of thousands, they may be able to send there one year, they will have to replace the next; and that their attempts to carry on the cultivation of those settlements without Negroe slaves; will be entirely fruitless.

F I N I S.